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ABSTRACT

Some of the prelevant ways by which the schools, through their special education programs, deal with handicapped children are considered; and an alternative to the present system is explored. Covered in brief sections are the following topics: three perspectives of special education practice (the conservative view, the piecemeal approach, and the humanistic view); the difference between bona fide and bogus handicaps; criticisms of the labeling practice; the inexactness of the term "learning disabilities"; a relational patterns paradigm as an alternative to labeliny which examines the ways in which children relate to situations, people, and things in the school environment; and advantages of a humanistic response to education. (SBH)

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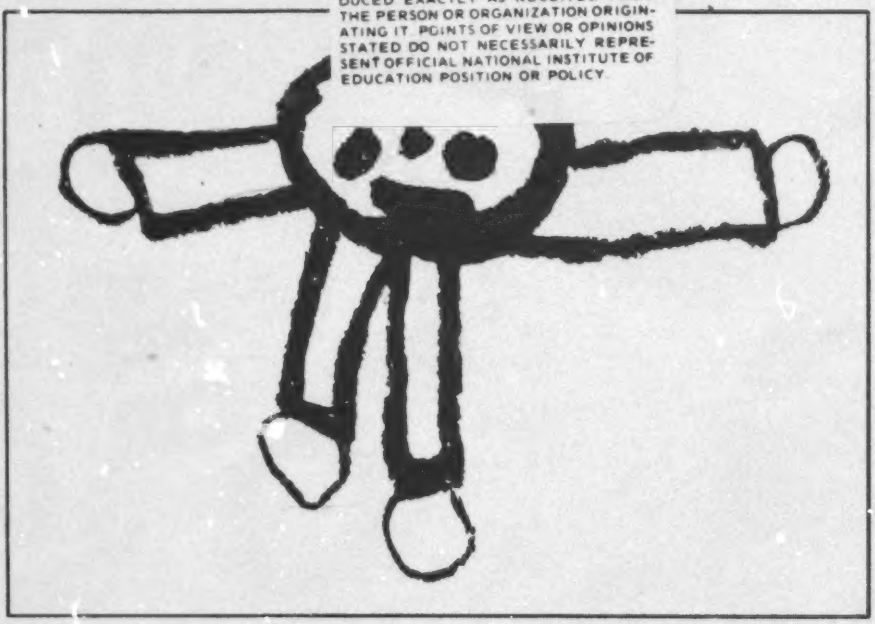

Steven D. Harlow

SPECIAL EDUCATION: THE MEETING OF DIFFERENCES

University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota
December 1975

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In November 1972, educators from several parts of the United States met at the University of North Dakota to discuss some common concerns about the narrow accountability ethos that had begun to dominate schools and to share what many believed to be more sensible means of both documenting and assessing children's learning. Subsequent meetings, much sharing of evaluation information, and financial and moral support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund have all contributed to keeping together what is now called the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation. A major goal of the Study Group, beyond support for individual participants and programs, is to provide materials for teachers, parents, school administrators and governmental decision-makers (within State Education Agencies and the U.S. Office of Education) that might encourage re-examination of a range of evaluation issues and perspectives about schools and schooling.

Towards this end, the Study Group has initiated a continuing series of monographs, of which this paper is one. Over time, the series will include material on, among other things, children's thinking, children's language, teacher support systems, inservice training, the school's relationship to the larger community. The intent is that these papers be taken not as final statements--a new ideology, but as working papers, written by people who are acting on, not just thinking about, these problems, whose implications need an active and considered response.

Vito Perrone, Dean
Center for Teaching & Learning,
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Introduction

In August 1974, the Congress enacted Public Law 93-380, which states "...it is to be the policy by the United States of America that every citizen is entitled to an education to meet his or her full potential without financial barriers." The law goes on to legally install the "goal of providing full educational opportunities to all handicapped children." States must, by 1976, submit timetables and plans to the federal government showing in detail how they will respond to this mandate. Public Law 94-142, passed in 1975, further requires that by September 1978 states begin appropriating funds for the education of all handicapped individuals between the ages of 3 and 18.

On first view, it would seem that the impact of this new legislation, while immense, will not involve major dislocation for the schools. A regimen for dealing with problemed students has already been established.

Increasingly since the 1950s, the needs of handicapped and problemed school children have been dealt with by specialists (such as special teachers of the "retarded," teachers of the "learning disabled," and speech therapists) working with children in relative isolation from the rest of the school staff.

Two patterns of aid, in particular, have become the general practice: Either children (e.g. "speech disabled," some "learning disabled") are seen for a short period of time during a school day, or they spend most or all of the school day in an educational environment different from their non-handicapped peers. In the former instance, the setting may involve a special clinical or resource room for individual and small group activity, where children work with a specialist on problemed areas; afterwards they rejoin the non-handicapped children in the regular classroom. The latter setting is the self-contained classroom: here, working with a specialist, children receive almost their total education within the confines of the segregated class.

The specialists--the training and technology they bring to the child's problem--as well as the

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S.D.H.

physical arrangements involved in the allocation of special classrooms, constitute the special education arm of the school. Thus, for some districts, it would seem, response to the new legislation will merely involve an extension of what they already have been doing. For other districts with no special education arm, what would seem to be in order is the implementation of the prevalent regimen for dealing with special students; a ready-made model exists. But now this conclusion is open to question.

Ross Chapman (1975) of the National Center for Law and the Handicapped has pointed out that the conventional mode of dealing with the handicapped is currently under legal challenge. Moreover, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 sounds quite similar to the Civil Rights Act of 1974 in its objection to the "separate but equal" treatment of handicapped individuals. In certain court decisions, according to Chapman, segregated classrooms have been viewed as paralleling the unconstitutional "separate but equal" educational treatment of discriminated minority groups. It may come to be shown that segregated or highly differentiated treatment is unconstitutional and in violation of a student's civil rights. The legal position that seems to be emerging is that a child possessing a handicap or school-related problem should be placed within the "least restrictive environment;" in other words, an environment that maximizes the student's life opportunities. While I realize that the description, "least restrictive environment," lends itself to different interpretations, it does place an important parameter within the calculus of educating children who possess problems or limitations. I will be dealing with this concept throughout the monograph and, in the final portion of the essay, I hope to present a perspective that might serve to make it educationally meaningful.

FRAMEWORK

What is under investigation in this essay is some of the prevalent ways by which the schools, through their special education arm, deal with children possessing school-related difficulties. First, I have considered three perspectives for dealing with change in education and, therefore, in special education. Next, I have examined the distinction to be made between real and bogus handicaps. Finally, I have offered an alternative to the present state of affairs. Through-

out, I have explored the relationship in special education between assumption, practice, and the effect on children, and I have attempted to place special education in the larger picture of the schooling process.

The tone of this essay is critical of many of the practices of the special education profession. It views the profession and its function as being altogether too insular. This insularity, along with the geometric extension of services to an ever-growing number of children, has created a situation where special educators are, to use Kagan's (1971) words, "absorbed in activity" with little regard to the overall life picture of the child with whom they are dealing. I maintain that the seeming neglect by the special education practitioner of the question, "What does it mean to educate a child?", has translated itself into a school caste system, where the special child occupies the untouchable class, and in so doing, sometimes receives only a semblance of an education.

1

Perspectives to Educational Change

The ways by which the school addresses itself to the needs of the handicapped and problemed youngster can be understood best by the perspective that is brought to a situation requiring change. Charles Frankel (1968), in his incisive essay, "The Relation of Theory to Practice," highlighted general theoretical positions and their relationship to change. I would like to apply three general perspectives to special education practice: the conservative view, the piecemeal approach, and the humanistic view, the first two of which were formulated by Frankel.

THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW

Since the conservative view "holds that human life is too complex to be directed by the human intelligence" (Frankel), planning and theory are seen as unreliable means of managing change. Rather, the conservative maintains that inherited tradition should guide practice. "It is not theory, therefore, which should be used to give guidance to human affairs but inherited tradition, which is steeped in the realities of human life. For human action is not intelligible except as a product of inherited tradition. People behave the way they do for no reason more abstruce or complicated than simply that they inherited these ways of behavior" (Frankel).

In following the logic of this dictum, one starts with what the schools have been doing in the area of concern and extends it to new situations. No problem presents such sufficient difference that it cannot be dealt with in terms of traditional practice. To drastically shift in new directions would court confusion, conflict, and ultimately disappointment. For, in so doing, in Frankel's words, "we break people loose from the only effective controls they have over their behavior." Structure and continuity, then, assume a major importance as we confront the new.

When viewing the demands of children who possess school-related problems, the conservative

may respond in two different ways. One way departs little, if any, from conventional ways of handling special problems. Since there are some children who possess physical or intellectual limitations that do not permit them to fully compete in the regular classroom and, more importantly, special facilities exist for them within the schools, why experiment with other patterns of accommodation? Continue to strengthen existing special facilities, but be wary about extending the definition of handicap to include other types of school-related problems (such as broadening the definition of learning disabilities to include more pupils). This type of conservative response views the function of the special education arm of the school as dealing with a narrowly defined group of children in ways to which teachers, administrators, parents, and students have grown accustomed.

The second conservative response views the special education arm and its categorical orientation to children (e.g. mental retardation, learning disabilities) as unsound and outside of the bounds of traditional education. This type of conservative is dubious of treating children by positioning them in special classrooms on the basis of categorical definitions. Consequently, he may join certain non-conservatives in favoring a mainstreamed classroom.

The mainstreamed classroom advocated, however, is quite different from that proposed by, for example, the humanist. For the conservative is apt to view school as a setting where each student is provided opportunity for an education, rather than as a place where education is guaranteed a child. If a child is unable to make use of the opportunity, for *whatever reason*, that is a fact of life and not necessarily the school's responsibility. There will, in fact, be casualties. Nonetheless, while opportunity is provided, no special consideration is given to children who might experience school-related difficulties. Rather, it is understood that some will be able to take full advantage of their educational opportunities, while others will not. What is important to the conservative of this yolk is reducing special treatment for either special advantage or special disadvantage in education. Through the course of the schooling experience, talent, motivation, and achievement will become the factors that determine educational excellence. This path should not produce tragedy for those who do less well. It is a simple fact that we are not all the same.

My difficulty with the first conservative response is that it does not allow room to examine and critique the structure that exists. It takes for granted the value of the present arrangement of special education facilities merely because that is

what has developed. It does not ask: What results when a child is categorized and dealt with apart from his peers? Further, it does not ask: what does it mean to educate a child? Most simply, it fails to consider the quality of education provided for a child designated as special. Similarly, my criticism of the second conservative response is that it advocates a *laissez-faire* setting that encourages only the "naturally advantaged" child. Only this child is to gain the benefits of an education. The rest of the children can expect various states of neglect.

Granted, the effects of school are not immutable; other opportunities remain open to the person. But what could prove to be immutable and damaging is the labeling of those children who do not succeed or who present difficult problems in the classroom.

PIECEMEAL APPROACH

In contrast to the conservative view, the "piecemeal approach" holds that deliberate social change is necessary and desirable. Since all institutions possess imperfections and difficulties, professionals and managers have an obligation to propose remedies that better the state of affairs. Such an approach definitely gives rise to a form of activism. But this activism does not prompt the presentation of comprehensive blueprints pointing to an ideal institution. Rather, what it proposes is far more modest. Piecemealing "begins where the *pain* is actually felt, and defines its task as remedying the conditions that cause the pain. Its function is remedial--to eliminate evils, not to realize an antecedent plan for Good" (Frankel). Further, in localizing efforts to correct faulty parts of an institution, there is a wish to avoid conflict over different sets of value. By sticking to the atomistic conception of an institution, piecemealing chooses not to consider the whole and its direction as pertinent.

It is my contention that the piecemeal approach spawned the special education arm of the school. Special education was a response to the frustration and difficulty--pain, phantom and actual--that teachers experienced in regular classrooms trying to interact with children who revealed school-related problems. As the special education arm began to grow, "pain detectors," in the guise of psychodiagnosticians, were able to identify such potential pain creators as learning disabled children before they actually caused too much pain in the classroom. Special education became the handmaiden of the school, caretaking its castoffs.

Special education begot by the piecemeal

approach is bound to its birthright. Rather than view the total child, it has focused upon disability and problem. The quality of education has been reduced to either training, if the child's handicap was an enduring one, or correction, if the problem was amenable to special efforts. One way or another, the task of the special education arm became one of eliminating pain from the school.

As I develop this discussion about the state of special education, keep in mind the piecemeal approach.

THE HUMANISTIC VIEW

The third way of viewing change in the schools is humanistically, where human development takes precedence over the instrumental goals of society. The humanist begins with an image of the human being, conceives of a society that encourages those values most supportive of human development, and tries to influence institutions within society accordingly.

As a humanistic institution, the school should be vitally concerned with both the development and realization of the self and the encouragement of cooperative group processes. Underlying both concerns is the respect for human diversity. The school, and most properly the classroom, should be large enough to encounter many ways of being and learning. Shunting a child into a special classroom because of his being intellectually slow or physically handicapped becomes an antagonistic function of the humanistic school. Education is meant, fundamentally, to be a human effort and being intellectually slow or physically handicapped should not disqualify one from the human species.

The humanistic orientation to change differs from the piecemeal approach in that the latter, as I say, focuses upon conditions that are pain-producing, attempting either to correct the conditions or to eliminate the pain from the mainstream, while the former offers a comprehensive picture of what schools and classrooms should be: its beliefs are of a wholecloth. Atomistic change, though perhaps pragmatically beneficial, loses sight of what school should be and what students should become. From the perspective of the humanistic approach, the task now becomes one of linking the special education function with the efforts of educating a child, not a special child.

The humanistic orientation, moreover, differs from conservatism in its activism. Humanism desires change in the direction of those processes that generate openness and diversity within the schools.

As I say earlier, the conservative position is one that tends to view the schools as presenting opportunity, no more. The child is entitled to the opportunity to learn certain skills, as well as a body of knowledge. If some do not profit from the opportunity, that is only to be expected. At least, they had the opportunity. In many ways, the humanist expects more from the schools than the conservative. It is not enough to talk of missed opportunity; the schools have an obligation to educate all, even if this entails the creation of individualized instruction.

In the end, it may be that the great contribution of the conservatives is to remind those who wish to engage in educational change, like the humanist, that, as Frankel stated, "We are all more traditional than we know." Accordingly, proposals for change within the school "that do not take this fact into account are bound to failure."

2

Who Shall Be Handicapped?

The term "handicapped" usually refers to an extant physical or intellectual condition that limits the individual's ability to master certain situations. Moreover, the handicap is a permanent condition, one to which the individual has to accommodate himself. Two important qualities in the legitimate use of the term "handicapped" are underscored by this definition.

First, the phrase, "*extant* physical or intellectual condition," implies that the condition can be shown to exist by objective and verifiable means. It is a permanent condition. When dealing with physical and sensory conditions, objective verification does not pose a real difficulty; similarly, when dealing with severe mental retardation, producing a verifiable diagnosis does not present difficulty. When determining moderate retardation, emotional disturbance, or learning disabilities, however, objectivity is quite hard to come by. In designating the latter categories, more often than not, the personal judgment of a professional becomes the critical element.

Second, the above definition emphasizes the situational nature of a handicap. The individual is restricted in meeting the demands of certain situations, but he is *not* handicapped in other situations. The orthopedically handicapped student, for example, will face obvious restrictions in his ability to compete in athletic events, but his difficulties in mobility should have little affect on his capacity to handle the learning of abstract principles. Part of the real advances in vocational rehabilitation are in finding and creating situations where the individual is, in fact, not handicapped.

While the situational quality of the definition reminds us of the important potential of the individual as he encounters areas where he is not restricted, this potential is realized too infrequently. In reality, the specificity of a handicap is vitiated by the common tendency of both the handicapped individual and those with whom he interacts to treat the handicapping condition as a total condition. The handicap is viewed as a condition that pervades the entire life of the individual possessing it; it is seen as disqualifying the individual for full and effective

participation in life. A reductive process then occurs; the individual possessing the handicap becomes a handicapped individual. His total being is reduced to his handicap.

There is, then, a wide difference between recognizing an extant handicap so that educational opportunities can be planned, and stigmatizing one as a handicapped individual. The first distinction recognizes an important fact about the individual--his limitation--without losing sight of his other qualities, while the second distinction rests solely upon the handicap. Recognizing the handicap in the schools, while necessary, can lead to a point where a label becomes the currency of communication among school personnel. It is not long before a label replaces the person. With this, an insidious phenomenon occurs: difference, which the label denotes, becomes equated with inferiority.

The humanistic perspective would assert that an individual--handicapped or not--is entitled to his full uniqueness. The humanist would further maintain that primary institutions, such as the school, should interrupt the deliterious practice of reducing a person to a label. Such reduction has a profound effect upon the life opportunities of the individual. As Goffman (1963) writes: "The attitudes we normals have toward a person with a stigma, and the action we take in regard to him, are well known, since these responses are what benevolent social action is designed to soften and ameliorate. By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if unthinkingly, reduce his life chances."

It is interesting to note that it is often in our benevolence that we most critically reflect and reinforce the stigma. Often, in providing a setting or in modifying a setting to accommodate the individual with a handicap, we not only call attention to the handicap but will "pad" his school world. In carefully deciding what the child can handle "successfully," we may place him in a false world; a world the non-handicapped child does not inhabit. In essence, the school has predetermined "reality" for the handicapped, "reality" that is unfortunately out of sync with the non-programmed real world.

The dynamics and effects of stigmatization in the school situation become clear. First, attention is drawn to the area of the handicap. Second, the child's uniqueness is displaced by the label of his handicap. Third, in preparing to meet the handicapped child's educational needs, he is treated in a way quite different from his non-handicapped peer. He has a specialist (e.g. special education teacher, learning disabilities teacher) teaching him; in fact, he may have a special classroom provided for him and

those like him. Both of these factors underscore and reinforce his difference. Fourth, the educational regimen calls for a selection of tasks that the child can readily handle. That is, along with the desire to have the handicapped child enveloped in success goes the exclusion of unpleasant or uncertain learning events. The consequence is a "padded" environment, which, at least during his school career, keeps the real world of uncertainity and frustration at a distance. As a consequence, as time goes on, that child will be less able to handle the uncertainty and frustration that is involved in much of learning.

A paradox may be discerned. The school focuses upon the problemed area of a child's being, while at the same time attempting to create a setting where few problems confront him. The handicapped child is thought by those who plan and care for him to be unable to handle much of the real world. As far as school is concerned, rather than aid a child in his mastery of that much of the world, it is to be denied him.

Fifth, the labeled child is subtly convinced he cannot handle much of what is ordinarily to be explored and learned. The authority of the school (aided perhaps by his parents)* has mirrored to him that a child with a handicap such as he possesses can only handle so much and no more. This lessening of self-expectation becomes internalized. The child begins to expect less of himself--at least in the school setting. Rather than following the ostensible desire of the special education arm of the school that the child begin to feel he is able to achieve, the child feels that he is less capable. After all, he senses that in a school situation he is at a disadvantage.

It should be pointed out that stigmatization is not entirely a bitter pill for the handicapped child. The child begins to realize that many of life's tasks, which could normally be difficult and painful, are spared him.

Sixth and lastly, as time passes, the combination of lower self-expectation and the padded classroom environment, which insulates the child from potential growth, renders the child handicapped in a total way. He is by attitude and orientation less able to handle the requirements of life. In a word, the child has become an invalid.

*The parents' response to the stigmatization process is variable and complicated. At one extreme may be found a parent who, in his uncertainty, fosters dependency on the part of his child toward non-handicapped adults and peers. This parent readily submits to the stigmatization process being described. At the other extreme, we see parents who completely deny the handicap and consequently treat their child in an unrealistic manner. Most parents fall between these extremes. They desire that their child develop his potential as a human being while accepting the limitation of his handicap.

THE BOGUS HANDICAPS

There are some who will arrive at school with bonafide handicaps--handicaps that are capable of being objectively verified. Most often, these represent manifestly physical or severe intellectual problems.

Verifiability is related to their visibility.

Most of the handicaps that the special education arm of the school deal with, however, do not fulfill the criterion of visibility. Such assumed handicaps as learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, and educable mental retardation are usually school-related and often visible only within the school context. (For the most part, parents don't discern these difficulties in their children's behavior at home.) Visibility is constituted by slow or erratic achievement and poor social adjustment. In other words, a discrepancy is exhibited between the expectations of school personnel and the behavior of a child. While I recognize that this may be an undesirable state of affairs, and perhaps should be addressed, the designation of "handicapped," or its euphemisms, "exceptionality" and "disability," are not warranted.

Within the public schools, the handicap that launched special education as a contributing force was educable mental retardation. As Lilly (1975) has stated:

> Two events in the early part of this century...drastically changed the face of special education: compulsory schooling and introduction of French-developed intelligence tests into this country. Compulsory schooling brought masses of students into contact, and inevitable conflict, with the school system designed for the elite, with a strong emphasis on preparation for advanced schooling. Naturally the failure rate was rather high. At the same time, translation and use of intelligence tests offered a basis of postulating a *cause* for failure of students to learn in school, mental retardation.

Before the time of compulsory attendance, a child who in later times would have fallen into the category of educable mental retardation did not view himself, nor did anyone else view him, as being retarded. Illiteracy at the turn of the century was epidemic, and while schooling was desirable it was certainly not necessary to gain a livelihood and ably function in society. As indicated above, education was an institution devoted to the interests of those in the upper strata of our society. Accordingly, education was not the touchstone of most children's identity that it has become today. In a very real sense, educable retardation is an artifact of the increased importance of the schools and schooling process.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the movement to provide special classes for the edu-

cable retarded has become greatly accelerated. Students who reveal general slowness are administered an intelligence test to determine if lower intelligence is the primary cause of their poor academic functioning. If, on the intelligence test, a child's rating falls within the 50 to 75 (or 80) IQ range, he is a candidate for placement in a special class (or a resource room) designed for the educable mentally retarded.

There exists, however, a deep controversy surrounding the intelligence test as an instrument on which to base significant school and life decisions. John Williams (1975), in his *Testing and the Testing Industry: A Third View*, has dealt capably with the many questions that chip away at the certainty with which the instruments were once held. Many assert that a strong bias oriented toward the white middle-and upper-socioeconomic strata exists within the instruments. Padilla and Garza (1975), for example, reported that "Mexican-American children were two times as likely to be found in classes for slow learners in Texas, and two and a half times as likely in California. The major factor for this placement was poor performance on standard IQ tests." Ross Evans (1974), a black psychologist, has baldly proposed "a moratorium on important evaluative, educational and social research until we have more adequate instruments...."

While the rating attained on the intelligence test is central to placement within the special classroom for the educable retarded, it is not the only criterion used. Dunn (1963) has pointed out that "while 5 percent of the school population obtain IQ scores between 50-75, about half of this number work up to or near capacity in the regular grades and seem to be reasonably well adjusted. Therefore, they have not been labeled mentally retarded." It may not be merely a matter of the one half meeting academic expectations, but rather that the other half is failing to adjust to behavioral demands of the classroom. As Farber (1968) wrote:

> Ordinarily, when retarded children are placed in special classes, the decision is made not solely on the basis of tested intellectual abilities, but because they disrupt classroom routines and interfere with other children.

It is this ingredient--great difficulty in meeting the behavioral expectations of the conventional classroom--that is at the heart of the bogus handicap. Unlike a bonafide handicap, the bogus handicap is associated chiefly with the school experience. That is to say, a child is not viewed as handicapped until he arrives at school.* There he finds great problems in facing the academic and behavioral

*At first stunned by such a designation, the parents of the so-called "learning disabled" child typically become reassured by the promise of the availability of a specialist to work with their child. They generally assent to the process of "handicapping;" in fact, they may become advocates of special programs. It is important to recognize, however, that no other alternatives are provided the parents. Parents of children with school-related difficulties generally have accepted the authority of the school in its judgment and handling of their children. Again, have they had much choice?

demands of school. However, instead of being visible, which is a characteristic associated with handicaps, school-related "handicaps" are often defined as "hidden." For example, Anderson (1970), in referring to learning disabilities, stated:

> It is not apparent in the physical appearance of the young person. He may have a robust body, good eyes, sound ears, and a normal intelligence. He has a disability of function, however, which is just as real as a crippled leg.

We thus come to the interesting practice of "handicapping". That is, the designation of the label of handicapped, disabilitied, or exceptional to children who do not possess an actual handicap, but instead reveal difficulties in meeting conventional academic and behavioral expectations.

3

A Narrowing of Normality

Various reasons prompt the school to label as handicapped children who present learning or behavioral problems. Certainly a paramount consideration is simply the desire to aid a child who, in the school situation, is experiencing difficulties and consequent stress. By "handicapping," advocates will argue that we call attention to a growing number of children whose educational needs are not being met. One does not, however, have to plumb this argument too deeply before it becomes apparent that it takes for granted the notion that only by "handicapping" children whose educational needs are not being met can we begin to meet their needs.

What the argument for handicapping actually implies is that there are a number of children who depart from the school's conception of what is "normal". It is the argument that brings to the fore the calculus of dealing with difference in the schools. A student whose needs are not being met is often one who frustrates the teacher--either because of the student's inability to learn what is to be learned or because the student exhibits behavior that puzzles the teacher and others. It is often because of the teacher's failure to understand or reach the child that the child is considered different. The onus usually falls upon the student.

Difference is an unwelcome visitor in the conventional classroom. Different behavior, attitudes, or thoughts, if we do not allow room for them, generate psychological uncertainty. As Kagan pointed out: "Psychological uncertainty intrudes into the stream of mental life whenever a deviation from an established norm is encountered." It would seem that the established norm is being narrowed to the point that, as Shrag and Divoky (1975) comment, "...even those not segregated in special programs as a consequence of...screens and labels, those not drugged or otherwise 'treated', are likely to be conditioned by their chilling effects: if they don't conform, they too may be placed in one of those classes or be labeled as maladaptive."

In part, the practice of labeling, separating, and removing children who reveal behavioral or learning difficulties from other children is to achieve

a homogeneous classroom--a classroom with minimal difference and therefore minimal conflict and uncertainty. Again, the special education arm, in its "piecemealing" function, must extract pain from the classroom.

It now appears that an impending major duty of the special education arm will be to recognize and deal with the maladaptive student. In fact, a proliferation of labels for this bogus handicap (not including clinical terminology) is gaining currency in the schools. They include:

maladaptive child
maladjusted child
emotionally disturbed child
emotionally handicapped child
emotionally disordered child
mentally ill child
behaviorally disturbed child
behaviorally maladaptive child
unsocialized aggressive child
socialized aggressive child
withdrawn child
overinhibited child
immature child

Differences in estimations of the prevalence of emotional disturbance vary to large degrees. In reporting on the incidence of emotional disturbance among fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in a Minnesota school district, Stennett (1966), using the Bower screening device, found that 22 percent were either moderately or seriously emotionally disturbed. In contrast, the U.S. Office of Education uses what Kirk (1972) considered a conservative figure, a two percent estimate of emotional disturbance among school children.

The school's growing concern with normality and adjustment is reflected in a statement by Dreeben (1968) in his revealing book, *On What is Learned in School*. He puts it in this way: "To the question of what is learned in school (I answer) pupils learn to accept principles of conduct, or social norms and act according to them."

If adjustment becomes the predominant concern of the school, then even slight deviance is apt to be viewed as betokening a serious problem. Thus, the teacher, supported by the waiting special education arm, is likely to find many children who need, first, to be recognized as maladjusted and, second, to be modified. This direction of dealing with children who represent difference could easily lead us to a "conveyor belt" approach to schooling, where all children scoot by school professionals and are surveyed for defects. If a defect is found, the technology within the special education arm is applied

to modify and correct the defect. Even if such correction were possible, a child who came back to the conveyor belt would be labeled "damaged merchandise."

There have been some strong counsels of caution about the schools becoming involved with the labeling of children as "disturbed" or maladjusted." For one thing, it is too easy to do. Szasz (1970) quotes Radin (1962) in this way:

> The classroom teachers along with principal, school physician, school nurse, and visiting teacher, frequently call to the parents' attention the existence of a problem requiring psychiatric evaluation. The nature of the behavior which is symptomatic of deeper underlying disturbance is manifold, but may be grouped into several broad categories which rarely occur separately. (1) Academic problems--under-achievement, over-achievement, erratic, uneven performance. (2) Social problems with siblings, peers--such as the aggressive child, the submissive child, the show-off. (3) Relations with parental and other authority figures, such as defiant behavior, submissive behavior, ingratiation. (4) Overt behavioral manifestations, such as tics, nail-biting, thumbsucking, and interests more befitting to the opposite sex (such as tomboy girl and effeminate boy).

Szasz then goes on to rejoin what Radin has put forward:

> There is no childhood behavior that a psychiatrist could not place in one of those categories, thus classifying the child as requiring psychiatric attention. To categorize academic performance that is 'underachievement', 'overachievement', or 'erratic performance' as pathological would be humorous were it not tragic.

Similarly, Koestler (1974) warned that American psychiatrists have a tendency to find disturbance and abnormal functioning where their British counterparts did not. In pointing to the marked press on the part of American society to adjustment, Koestler made the following conclusion:

> ...could it be that psychiatrists, immersed in the bustling American world, are inclined to see apathy where their colleagues from this country (Great Britain) only see placidity or British phlegm? The Americans also found considerable 'paranoid projection' and 'perceptual distortion' in the same patient in which the

British found none of these symptoms. Could it be that psychiatrists in a highly conformist country read paranoid traits where the British see only idiosyncrasy or mild eccentricity?

Accordingly, the preoccupation with adjustment is not a mere phenomenon of the schools but instead takes its cues from forces within the society, in general.* While it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine these forces, it is within its purpose to suggest that the school, as a humanistic institution, must possess an independent view of its students' possibilities and be clear that this will not always correspond to the needs for uniformity demanded by a bureaucratic-industrial age. Otherwise, we will have schools that see themselves, in the words of Mayer (1975), "as representatives of authority, not as advocates of children;" schools, in the end, that stress submission to authority rather than self-realization.

*See Fromm (1955), Riesman (1953), and Fair (1974).

4

The Disease of the Decade: Learning Disabilities

Charles Silberman (1975), the distinguished commentator on the state of education, has referred to learning disabilities as a movement that is "appalling, the most destructive force in American education in my memory, an excuse for not teaching, and not responding, apart from the labeling involved which becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy." At the same time, Diane Divoky (1975), in talking of learning disabilities, has stated:

> To see every variation from some magic norm as a disability is to limit remorselessly the boundary of what passes for normality. And to treat in fact social problems, nonreaders and nonconformists as medical problems is to admit the bankruptcy of the schools in finding real solutions.

In responding to Divoky's comments, Barbara Bateman (1975), a trailblazer in the area of learning disabilities, has added to the criticism of the field:

> Learning disabilities has become an incredibly successful excuse for the failure of public schools to adequately teach those children who truly need good teaching.

No one will deny the enormous growth of the field of learning disabilities. One decade ago, few children were stricken by this mysterious handicap; today estimates as to the number afflicted vary, on the conservative side, from one to three percent to, on the more enthusiastic side, thirty percent (Kirk, 1972). It has become, in a short period of time, the largest "handicapped" group in the public schools.

Along with the large number of children subsumed under its rubric, an enormous expansion of funds is being expended by the public schools for learning disabled children, among other school-related "handicaps." As Shrag and Divoky state:

> Between 1966 to 1975, the funds spent on public school programs for the handicapped

tripled, reaching some $2 billion, and the figure has probably doubled since then; a majority of states now provide substantial assistance to local districts for special classes, including classes for learning disabilities.

In order to get aid (professional and economic) from legislatures for children with difficulties, there is a press to designate them handicapped. Typically, local schools receive compensation for each child identified for special services from the state. Concomitant with the economic factors are the impelling state laws mandating educational opportunities under the aegis of the public schools for all children regardless of handicap. State departments of special education have quite naturally interpreted "handicapped" to include learning disabilities. Too, parents frustrated by the poor educational progress of their children have formed the influential Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD).

THE EVOLUTION OF A DISEASE

In 1947, Strauss and Lehtinen, in their immensely influential work, *The Brain Injured Child*, drew attention to a child who revealed a syndrome of aberrant perceptual, thinking, and behavioral characteristics. In part, they described the brain-injured child in the following way:

> The response of the brain-injured child to the school situation is frequently inadequate, conspicuously disturbing, and persistently troublesome....He presents a picture of a child who is extremely mobile in attention and activity, unduly attracted by the doings of others or by the presence of normally inconspicuous background stimuli, inconstant and variable in interests, lacking persistence and sustained effort.

While interest in the Strauss-Lehtinen syndrom persisted through the 1950s, it was not until the mid-1960s that it became an area which began to engage the efforts of the public schools. By this time, labels describing the condition and related conditions had multiplied significantly.

In 1967, Dunn listed some of the terms and labels referring to the brain injured child that were prevalent at that time:

(1) Agenesis child
(2) Birth damaged child
(3) Chronic brain syndrome
(4) Clumsy child
(5) Exogeneous child
(6) Hyperactive child
(7) Hyperkinetic syndrome
(8) Imperceptive child
(9) Interjacent child
(10) *Major learning disordered child*
(11) Minimal cerebral injured child
(12) Minimal brain dysfunctioned child
(13) Nervous child
(14) Neurologically handicapped child
(15) Neurophrenic child
(16) Neuropsychological impaired child
(17) Neurosensory disordered child
(18) Organically impaired child
(19) Perceptually impaired child
(20) Perceptual-motor impaired child
(21) Psychomotor disordered child
(22) Psychoneurological disordered child
(23) Strauss syndrome

Dunn pointed out that minimal brain dysfunction (one of the many terms referring to brain injury) was an equivocal term. In comparing the annual reports of Child Study Centers located throughout a southern state, he found a great disparity in the way they categorized children. In some centers, 30 to 40 percent of the children seen were diagnosed "emotionally disturbed" and relatively few were "brain-injured" or "mentally retarded." Other centers found the opposite phenomenon: 30 to 40 percent categorized as "brain-injured" and a smaller incidence of "emotionally disturbed." Dunn concluded that the diagnostic category employed was due to the bias and training of the individuals involved in the diagnosis. As Dunn stated, "three different groups, depending upon their biases, could label the same child brain-injured, emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded. A dilemma indeed!"

There have always been children in the public schools who exhibit characteristics that would fit the Strauss-Lehtinen syndrome. They were usually the difficult-to-teach group. When the machinery was established for a special group to receive their education in a special way, as I described in the previous chapters, the entering wedge was placed in the view that the school had the responsibility to meet, in a special way, the needs of those who possessed school-related handicaps. As procedures and approaches were generated from work with the educable mentally retarded and from private programs for the brain injured (such as Strauss's and Lehtinen's Cove School), the special education program began to assume responsibility for those children who were not educable retarded but who exhibited the Strauss-Lehtinen syndrome. The term "learning disabled" came into vogue to describe those children in the public school set-

ting.

The term had certain advantages over "brain injured." First, it seemed less stigmatizing to call a child learning disabled. Second, parents would accept the term more readily than wording that suggested retardation. Third, it greatly simplified the problem of diagnosis for the schools. Brain injury falls within the province of the medical profession. It is an extremely difficult condition to verify. Neurologists, pediatricians, and pediatric neurologists have reported that they have found few or no abnormal signs in children categorized as minimally brain injured (Dunn, 1965). With the use of the term "learning disabilities," educationally related criteria could be used.

As the schools founded programs for the learning disabled, the definition took on broader application. In its first annual report (1968), the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children defined learning disabled as follows:

> Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic.

Too, many definitions include the discrepancy factor in determining learning disabilities. For example, one part of Bateman's (1965) definition specifies that the children "manifest an educationally significant discrepancy between their estimated intellectual potential and actual level of performance." The latter definition extends the notion of learning disabilities to most forms of underachievement.

My difficulty with the above definitions is their lack of specificity. They are slippery and hard to pin down. But because they are somehow exempt from meeting any criterion of clarity, they can be applied wholesale. For example, viewing the definition of the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, one is sent into wonderment. What are the basic psychological processes? Are they constructs offered to us by Delacoto or Myklebust, or the I.T.P.A., or Frostig, or Barsch? What is the scale that should be used to determine disorder? If the disorders are to be determined by their manifestation in listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic, then who will be left who is not learning disabled?

In examining Bateman's definition, one is again prompted to ask: What determines estimated intellectual potential? The answer given most often is an intelligence test rating. Earlier in this

essay, I raised the questionable nature of the use of the intelligence test for such determinations. Viewing the second element in the discrepancy factor, "actual level of performance," one would legitimately need to ask: Performance in what area? Does it refer to the broad farrago stated in the National Advisory's definition, following which it would not be difficult to label any child (or adult, for that matter) as learning disabled?

What is totally ignored in the "definitions" of learning disabilities is the question of what should be learned in school. What should represent the spectrum of learning activities within the classroom? If, for example, reading is viewed not as the center of the curriculum but as one important function of learning arts and communication, then we place less emphasis on difficulties in reading progress. After all, there are other tasks to be learned. Scaling is not based upon one skill or function. Difficulties or "lack of progress" in an area do not assume the magnitude of a handicap (e.g. "learning disabilities").

Definitions often reside in ethereal spheres; it is far more germane to our discussion to view what types of problems actually qualify a child for inclusion in the "learning disabilities" category. McCarthy and McCarthy (1969) cited a compilation, by Clements, of reasons for referral for learning disabilities services. Clements reviewed more than 100 publications for his data. The 10 most frequently mentioned characteristics were as follows:

1. Hyperactivity
2. Perceptual-motor impairment
3. Emotional liability
4. General orientation effects
5. Disorders of orientation (e.g. short attention span, distractibility)
6. Impulsivity
7. Disorders of memory and listening
8. Specific learning disabilities in reading, arithmetic and spelling
9. Disorders in speech and hearing
10. Equivocal neurological signs and electroencephalographic irregularities

The only characteristic coming from Clements' review of the literature that refers to potential problems of underachievement (reflecting the discrepancy definition) is number eight, far down the list. This lends support to Divoky's contention that, most often, the child labeled "learning disabled" is a child who presents behavioral deviancy and, most particularly, "behaviors adults find unpleasant or threatening in children."

Kirk and Elkins (1974), in recognizing that

the "field of learning disabilities has probably the widest parameters of all the fields of special education," attempted to determine the characteristics possessed by children participating in programs for the learning disabled. They viewed children enrolled in Child Services Demonstration Centers in Learning Disabilities. Data came from 24 projects in 21 states. While 35 percent of the enrollees had IQ's below 90 (which compares with the 25 percent one could expect using a normal distribution), the mean IQ of the participating children was 93. Thus, the group reflected a greater proportion of children possessing IQ ratings from the high educable retarded range to the bottom of the normal range. In many instances, the learning disabilities project assumed responsibility for children who have intelligence ratings that are low but not low enough to qualify them for special classrooms for the educable mentally retarded. As Kirk and Elkins summarized:

> The data from this report shows that a substantial number of children in the projects were equally underachieving in all academic subjects and tested below IQ of 90. Previously, many of these children would have been classified as slow learners or mentally retarded.

Another significant finding was the focus of remediation. Eighty percent of those labeled learning disabled had need for remedial reading. In fact, for two-thirds of the students, reading was the primary focus of their engagement with the Center. Kirk and Elkins reported a discrepancy of 1.7 grades between the reading grade attained on an achievement test and grade expectations based upon the child's chronological age. It may be, however, that the referring teacher, in comparing the child to grade level expectations, may have used an unrealistic base on which to judge progress.

In their summary, Kirk and Elkins offer a caution regarding the use of the term "learning disabilities:"

> In some projects it was obvious that they were not dealing with specific learning disabilities--but rather with a general learning problem in a number of subjects as is generally found with (a) slow learning children or (b) children from disadvantaged environments.

The vagueness of the learning disabilities label prompted Scheffelin (1975), in a letter to the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, to move back

to fundamentals. She wrote:

> I propose a shift in the dialogue about definition. Are we not arguing about *learning disability* before we have discussed learning and its definition?

The inexactness of the definition of learning disabilities has permitted the schools, encouraged by its special education arm, to place a heterogeneous group of children into a bogus handicapped category. The commonality among most of these children so placed is their difficulty in handling some of the demands of conventional education. They are children who teachers have found hard to teach and sometimes difficult to manage. The child who was not handicapped before coming to school discovers through his interaction with school personnel that he is different in a most negative way. The famous dictum of the sociologist W.I. Thomas seems wholly appropriate here: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequence." The child has been regarded as handicapped and he becomes so.

5

An Alternative to Handicapping

The ostensible purpose of designating a child as handicapped, when he is having school-related difficulties, is to provide him with a better educational environment. Another purpose is to bring professional resources to the fore without which that child would be left in the problemed condition in which he was found. Not to intervene and recognize the problemed functioning, many educators are convinced, is tantamount to not educating the child. These educators maintain it is far more humane to recognize a school-related handicap that is causing distress to the child, his teachers, and perhaps his peers, than to permit it to continue. Further, they point to the tremendous damage dealt a child's self esteem when he is unable to keep up academically or is regarded as slow or different by others. A strong case can be built for intervention by the special education arm of the school, it would seem. After all the arguments have been made, there still exists a child with a school-related problem.

I do not disagree with this conclusion: when a school-related problem does exist, a child experiences an element of suffering and pain within the school context. In many cases, though not yet labeled by the school, a child will scale himself against the efforts of his more able classmates or narrowly define himself in the classroom by his own lack of progress in a skill, such as reading. The resulting self-labeling takes on a dynamic of its own. There are, in fact, children who seem to show little involvement in, and seem sealed off from, classroom experiences. They reveal difficulties that do not easily permit their growth and education. Instead of being free and open, their behavior seems stereotyped and determined. These children seem to be prisoners of severe internal controls. Teachers confronted with such children have a direct responsibility to provide an educational environment for them. But little, if anything, is to be gained by categorizing such a child as handicapped.

First, by terms of the stringent definition offered in Chapter 2, he is not handicapped. He possesses neither a visible condition nor a severe unchangeable intellectual problem. Rather he pre-

sents functioning and behavior that are problemed, (and problemed, perhaps, only in the school setting). Functioning can certainly change and does; the label of "handicapped" or "disabled" has greater sustaining power. It may, in fact, stay with the individual, as in the case of educable mentally retarded, long after his school career is completed. One has to pitch this labeling practice against the newly emerging legal definition of the best education being that which represents the "least restrictive environment." Certainly, limiting a child's life opportunities by virtue of a label does not fulfill the obligation for providing the "least restrictive environment".

Second, when the school categorizes a child as handicapped, it is not long before the label reduces the child to his handicap. The labeling phenomenon (which I explored in Chapter 2) not only differentiates the designated child from other children but the differentiation represents an order of part-human status. The child is no longer an individual endowed with uniqueness, but becomes instead a member of a handicapped category. In some instances, by virtue of being designated as such by the school, the child learns for the first time that he is different from others in a negative way. In other children, for whom notions of failure and feelings of inferiority are familiar, the function of labeling is merely to confirm by institutional edict what they had already suspected. Again, one needs to view the concept of least restrictive environment against this effect of labeling.

Third, a labeling orientation promotes the proliferation of special classrooms and facilities. After all, it might be argued, if a group of children with common characteristics representing a "handicap" form a significant portion of the school population, then why not call upon the special education arm of the school to provide separate and special treatment.

On the other hand, the refusal to label a child as handicapped does not preclude the recognition of problemed functioning. In identifying functioning that prevents education and individual growth, and seeing it as such, we are attempting, first, to understand the child and, second, to begin helping him achieve a higher level of functioning. As Maslow (1968) puts it: "Understanding a person is not the same as classifying or rubricizing him." Understanding is essential to the education of a child.

A PARADIGM: RELATIONAL PATTERNS

As a way of viewing children's functioning in the classroom setting, it might be helpful to examine

general *relational patterns* that individual children might disclose. By relational patterns, I mean ways in which children relate to situations, persons, and things in the school environment. The patterns that I would like to examine are: surviving, adjusting, and encountering, all of which differ in their openness to experience, their maturity, and their capacity to operate freely. While I will refer to children who reveal a predominant relational pattern by a corresponding typology (survivor, adjustor, or encounterer), I feel this approach represents a major departure from the practice of labeling a child handicapped. The purpose of the paradigm is to help describe and understand a child's functioning in order to encourage him to a higher level of functioning. Rather than designate a label that indicates to school personnel a condition of some endurance, the typology describes functioning that is amenable to change. Further, the paradigm permits a child to be described in different terminology, as the situation indicates. For example, a child may be a "survivor" in confronting reading activities, but an "encounterer" during free classtime.

The most immature and the least open of the relational patterns is that of survival. A child operating at the survival level is concerned with merely getting through time and space without disturbing his established ways of satisfying needs. For whatever reason--perhaps he has learned that his environment is a dangerous and painful place, and cannot by his efforts be mastered--the child wishes to keep things constant and reduce the amount of change in his world. Accordingly, his behavior is extremely stereotyped and rigid. When confronted by a new situation, he will ignore its special demands and treat it as if it were no different than previous situations. Where problems arise, the survivor unsuccessfully attempts to meet them by responding with generally inappropriate behavior. He may, for example, be prone to lash out destructively or withdraw completely when a problem situation presents itself. To the observer, it would appear that such behavior is self-defeating--and it is--but it serves the function of preventing the child from involving himself and opening himself to something in his environment that may prove overwhelming. Here, after all, is a child with little confidence in his ability to alter matters by direct action. Often, in children exhibiting the survival pattern, we see an inability to delay impulse or the need they feel for immediate gratification. It is almost as if such a child were prisoner to his own inner urges. As an effect, he has little power of mediation over his action. In short, he cannot consider before he acts.

The seeming advantage of the survival pattern

is safety through predictability and the reduction of uncertainty. Its disadvantages are obvious. Since he does not, in the words of David Franks, "risk poor input," he cannot grow; he denies himself the opportunity to learn better ways of coping with his environment; and he is bound to the immediate satisfaction of his basic needs. The net effect is that he is closed even in the most open of classroom environments.

It is conceivable that many who are now seen as "handicapped" or "disabled" by the schools do indeed reveal the survival pattern. But it is important to keep in mind that certain children will survive situations that promise little chance of success and yet disclose involvement and higher relational patterns in areas where they feel they can succeed. This may be the pattern of certain children who have been labeled learning disabled in their reluctance to engage certain activities, which present difficulty, while becoming absorbed in other areas.

Table 1. Relational Patterns: Characteristics of the Survivor

1. Feels his efforts will have little effect on the classroom environment.
2. Since it is believed that the external world cannot by his own efforts be mastered, there may be an escape to an internal world, which will shield him from what he cannot handle.
3. May assume that critical others view him as being unworthy.
4. Lacks feelings of self-worth.
5. Not reinforced by the ongoing system and its activities.
6. Holds the belief that he "can't."
7. Wishes safety.
8. Not expansive. That is, unwilling to attempt the new.
9. Closed, noninvolved. Change is feared and avoided.

The second relational pattern is that of adjustment. At this level, the child is less preoccupied with predictability and is far more open to others than was true of the survivor. The adjustor's concern is that of learning what is expected of him by others and then producing corresponding behavior. His sensitivity to a reference group's norms and expectations is characteristic of David Riesman's other-directed individual. His reinforcements and rewards come from the response of others to his behavior. Security comes from being able to assess what is being "paid off" in a situation and then

affecting the behavior that will allow him to cash in. He is intolerant of divergence from the perceived correct ways of behaving, thinking, and valuing. While the adjustor is not fearful of change, as was true of the survivor, awareness of change and novelty is controlled. New ways of thinking and behaving are first sanctioned by an individual or reference group representing authority, before they are considered by the adjustor. Thus, a slow flow of acceptable change is ensured. As a result, he experiences very few things first hand. The picture of the adjustor that is emerging is one of a child vitally concerned with the "right way."

The advantages of this pattern over the survival patterns are apparent. There is less rigidity, more awareness, more sensitivity to others. Yet the limitations of the adjustor are striking. Though he may believe otherwise, he is not directing his own life. He must always wait for the green light before he attempts something new. Not only is he unresponsive to individuals who represent different and therefore unacceptable ways of doing things, but he is closed to divergent possibilities residing within himself. To this extent, he is less open and no classroom environment will automatically open him.

Table 2. Relational Patterns: Characteristics of the Adjustor

1. Concerned with the "right way," which is defined by what other key people want and do.
2. A need for predictability and order.
3. Reinforcements and rewards come from response of others to his behavior.
4. More concerned with the demands of the situation than with questioning it for some greater meaning.
5. Deference to norms and authorities when confronting problems.

The relational pattern of greatest maturity (and it should be added that maturity has little to do with chronological age) is that of the encounterer. Many educators and psychologists (among them Jean Piaget, Eric Erikson and John Holt) have described the individual functioning at this level. In contrast with the adjustor and survivor, the encounterer is less concerned with security and certainty, and much more occupied with what Erikson referred to as an inner mechanism that permits the individual "to turn passive into active" and "to maintain and regain in this world of contending forces an individual sense of centrality, of whole-

ness, and of initiative" (Erikson). John Holt (1969) depicts the encounterer as a child who "wants to make sense out of things, find out how things work, gain competence and control over himself and his environment:"

> He is open, receptive, and perceptive. He does not shut himself off from the strange, confused, and complicated world around him. He observes it closely and sharply, and tries to take it all in....He is experimental...he wants to find out how it works, and he works on it....He can tolerate an extraordinary amount of uncertainty, confusion, ignorance, and suspense.

Table 3. Relational Patterns: Characteristics of the Encounterer

1. Self-directed in his learning.
2. Independent in judgment and behavior.
3. More capable and willing to make choices.
4. Excitement is generated through learning.
5. Socially sensitive in that he is more able to deal with divergencies in others and in himself.
6. Questions rules and norms as to some greater value.
7. Greater involvement in a situation or interest.
8. More comfortable with change, flexible.
9. When an encounterer is placed in a position of authority, he is interested in facilitating the self expression of others as they approach common problems. He is apt not to be seen as efficient.

IMPLICATIONS

Several implications flow from the paradigm and its relationships to special education:

First, as mentioned before, it obviates the need to label a child who reveals school-related difficulties as "handicapped" or "disabled."

Second, by focusing upon functioning, the paradigm presents the teacher with a way of assessing and describing patterns that may impede learning and growth.

Third, the paradigm assumes that while desirable in themselves, the learning of skills that simply permit adjustment, and the simple removal of the obstacles to learning, set too low a ceiling for the survivor. Rather, the direction given suggests efforts that go beyond adjustment. It indicates an

opening-up process that encourages a child to learn skills and modes of learning that ultimately lead to self-direction and growth.

Fourth, the paradigm is a reminder that children may disclose different relational patterns in different situations. It asks the teacher to consider areas of functioning where the child with difficulties may be adjusting or encountering. It encourages the teacher to look for higher levels of functioning instead of concentrating efforts wholely on problemed patterns. Every child is viewed as an individual possessing the potential for self-direction and growth.

The paradigm does not prescribe a caste system with special students frozen, as survivors, at the bottom, but rather describes an upwardly mobile classroom where children learn skills and attitudes that permit functioning at a higher level. While exponents of the learning disabilities approach to school-related problems would expouse the same desire, their practices seldom correspond to their words. The child designated as "learning disabled" is most often dealt with outside the classroom in special sessions with a learning disabilities "specialist." Most often, there is minimal communication between the regular classroom teacher and the specialist other than the implicit assumption that the needs of the learning disabled child are being handled. The improvement in functioning that sometimes occurs in the session rarely transfers itself back into the regular classroom.

If the upward mobility of the classroom is to be realized, special education, while keeping its concern for the survivor, must eschew its insularity, and from the widest perspective--one encompassing no less than the whole process of the educational spectrum--deal with the question: What does it mean to educate a child?

6

A Humanistic Perspective

The humanistic response to that last question involves regard for the following:

1. The child's uniqueness.
2. His unity.
3. Recognition of his present functioning in the school situation.
4. His capacity for growth and freedom.

From this, we can see the humanistic perspective when viewing the survivor. It is two-edged. First, the child's present situation is totally viewed. The survivor's difficulties are recognized and given their due. Second, his present is viewed in a broader context, as one involving growth in the direction of self-direction and free choice. Clearly, the ideals of the school in providing an education for the survivor are no different from that of any other child. The beginning point for the survivor is, however, quite different.

MAKING PROVISION FOR THE SURVIVOR

The capacity of the classroom to respond to the requirements of each rational pattern becomes a key issue. For what is needed by the survivor is of a quite different order from what is needed by the adjustor or the encounterer. Though, as I mentioned, the overall purpose of instruction is to move a child to higher relational patterns, the prerequisite of that objective is meeting the mode of functioning the child reveals in the classroom.

Accordingly, the classroom is viewed as a setting where differential environments can be created that meet the child at the level of his present functioning. As Hook (1973), in citing Dewey, has insisted:

> Unless we take into account the 'powers and purposes of those taught,' their needs, capabilities, attention spans, and related phenomenon, we cannot rely on the allegedly inherent educational value of any subject to be meaning-

fully acquired in the child's present experiences.

For the survivor, this will doubtless require a careful structuring of classroom experience, which permits the child to feel that he can effectively handle his environment. Since underlying the survival pattern is the child's assumption that he cannot handle parts or all of the classroom environment, the task of the teacher is to determine and provide activities that the survivor can master, and then to help him realize that there are connections between his actions and their effects on the outside world; that, in fact, the effects are predictable. This begins to constitute a locus of meaning to the child. For, as Becker (1964) has stated, "An event or object is meaningful only when we can predict its impact upon us."

As the child acts upon tasks and perceives the impact of his actions, his classroom world begins to become more stable. This stability is essential if the child is to begin to leave his survival patterns and venture forth in a classroom that is less determined. What occurs then, over time, is that the survivor's need for predetermined constancy is replaced by a new network of dependable relationships, which are based upon his successful actions on, or mastery of, at least a portion of the classroom environment.

Finally, as the child begins to sense his powers of mastery, a new self-regard emerges. This self-regard enables the child to open himself to endeavors that before would have proved to be defeating. (Too often, the child with learning difficulties is confronted with the very activities that stress his survival.)

It needs to be emphasized that change is rarely rapid. The rapid change sometimes associated with behavior modification, for example, often represents no more than situational control by the teacher. That is to say, a child senses that a situation is stacked against him and yields to its demands as a way of surviving it. The change that seemingly takes place is actually only pretense.

Thus, while the three elements mentioned above--the selection of tasks by the teacher, the child acting upon the tasks and perceiving its effect, the emergence of a new self-regard based on mastery--do not preclude a behavioral management approach (in fact, in the first and second elements it seems indicated), they also involve a deep concern for the internal processes of the child. It is clear that it is not enough to structure the behavioral world of the child without an attendant change in the child's attitude toward his world and himself. Unless this is empathically gauged by the teacher

all that may occur is an exercise in behavioral control. In sum, change in relational pattern for the survivor takes time and requires great patience.

MAKING PROVISION FOR THE ADJUSTOR

Throughout this process, the teacher is vital in many ways, two of which are foremost: First, *in assessing and understanding the present functioning of the child.* By this, I mean observation that leads to insight into a child's survival pattern. Appropriate task selection and the creation of the proper classroom structure to meet the needs of the child are predicated on this understanding. Second, *in regarding a child's potential for higher relational patterns.* This lends a perspective to the teacher's efforts, pointing the way to the development of the child's full talents and human qualities. It is here that Buber's idea of the "thouness" of the person becomes significant. The teacher must see in the child the potential to become an independent learner capable of openly and freely encountering life's challenges.

In working with the adjustor, the teacher should intrude gently upon the child's established patterns, accenting discovery, the active exploration of the classroom world, greater student selection of learning tasks, and "learning how to learn." These are hardly automatic responses. Most children, in fact, require active prompting on the part of the teacher. Since the adjustor is centrally concerned with meeting external expectations and the consequent garnering of reinforcement, the teacher must encourage the child to gradually attempt self-initiative. By making explicit his valuing of the encountering process, the teacher will have begun to alter the expectations of the adjustor.

Further, the teacher must gradually shift his classroom emphasis from an external locus of evaluation to one that is internal; that is to say, from the student looking to individuals (teachers or classmates) other than himself for cues as to what to undertake and how well he is performing to a greater reliance on his own sense of those things. The adjustor needs experience in learning how to make use of his errors in the pursuit of his explorations.

MAKING PROVISION FOR THE ENCOUNTERER

Finally, a note on working with the encounterer: a child who is activated by intrinsic motivation and characterized by great curiosity and exploration without external direction. Needless to say, this

relational pattern needs an environment that permits its expression. While there are children who arrive at school as encounterers, the teacher must continue to foster their way of relating to the world. In addition, the classroom environment must provide the freedom and openness for his constant development.

One caveat concerning an education based exclusively upon encountering is offered by Arthur Pearl:

> To learn what one likes is to learn prejudices. If there is one thing we know about human beings, it is that they don't want to know what they don't want to know....Education self-selected will be no education. (1973)

The corrective to this is the active involvement on the part of the teacher. If true education represents, as Buber held, a "meeting between two individuals"--teacher and student--then the teacher brings not only resources and encouragement but challenge and balance to his meeting with the encounterer.

MAINSTREAMING

What has been described in these final two chapters is a way of conceiving mainstreaming, one of the most frequently discussed issues in education. The mainstreamed classroom is viewed as a setting where different learning environments can be created, corresponding to the needs of children who represent unique relational patterns. A further corollary of this is the belief that differences need not constitute a negative but, instead, can prove educative.

It has been my contention, in agreement with Public Law 93-380, that the survivor has the right to be placed in an environment that possesses the greatest growth potential. With this proposition in mind, consider why the regular classroom might be preferable, as I believe it to be, to both special class placement and partial special education attention (such as would be provided by a learning disabilities teacher or visiting counselor).

First, the process of labeling and its ill-effects are avoided.

Second, the piecemeal approach of the special education arm, rather than contributing to the improvement in overall functioning of the survivor, bifurcates his school world into events in his special sessions and events in the regular classroom.

Third, and related to the above, the insularity of special education minimizes the connection between what occurs in the special sessions and what follows in the classroom. As a consequence, there

is often little correspondence between what is developed in the session and tasks the child confronts in the classroom.

Fourth, and this applies mainly to self-contained classes for the educable retarded, the child is apt to remain in his educational station for his entire school career. As is well documented, this has manifold effects on the individual, not the least of which is the reduction of life possibilities.

Fifth, the greatest amount of upward mobility is possible in the mainstreamed room, using the paradigm now being considered.

In the mainstreamed classroom, the teacher is the center of responsibility in educating each child. This does not mean that other resources--such as specialists from special education--are not available to him. It does mean that the teacher does not consign the child to the specialist. The teacher must understand the child's functioning and further must guide the education of the child. If specialists are available, they are to give counsel, not to remove responsibility (Johnson, 1975).

It is apparent that the more human resources the teacher has to help implement his planning and approaches with the child, the better the situation. To acknowledge this does not remove the teacher from the center of relationship with the child, but permits more intelligent involvement. If teacher aides are not available, parents from the school neighborhood can provide valuable assistance. In any event, human resources are *sine qua non* to successful mainstreaming (or a successful classroom, for that matter).

Just as there are differences among children in their relational patterns, so there are differences among teachers. I would contend that innovation in education often fails because those who promote such innovation do not duly consider the difficulty some teachers have with the introduction of change in their classrooms. It is, therefore, folly to think that all--or perhaps even most--teachers can establish a mainstreamed classroom. To suggest such would create a potentially destructive situation for teacher and survivor alike. It seems clear that teachers who are asked to create a mainstreaming climate should be carefully selected. It seems equally clear that, if for no more than the teacher's confidence, he should be given preparation in some of the technology developed by special education.

If it is so that only a minority of teachers will be able or willing to establish a mainstreamed class, then what of the survivors left to the special arm of the school? It seems clear to me that special education is capable of, and is due for, a critical self-examination at all levels, beginning with the

question of what it means to educate a child. The answer to this question, in the case of the survivor, means more than removal from the classroom and isolated treatment. If special education practitioners can realize, in the words of Don Piper, that "they are not special," and reinforce the joint responsibility with the regular teacher for approaching the needs of the survivor, then the insularity will begin to disappear. It may be necessary for the special education arm to support the regular teacher instead of simply being the pain remover.

7

Conclusion

Regardless of the best intentions of many special educators, they have created a growing imperium based mainly upon bogus handicaps. That is not to say that the children possessing such bogus handicaps do not experience great difficulties in the conventional educational setting. It is to say that to the extent that special education expands its function to include more school-related handicapped children, it absolves teachers from providing an education for children who are difficult to teach.

The legal concept of least restrictive environment would seem best served where a classroom is complex enough to regard differences in functioning. It would seem further served when the aims of education do not differ for children who reveal lower relational patterns. As London (1971) has stated it, expressing caution:

> Anything that reduces an individual's ability to make choices (whether he wants choices or not) is objectionable precisely because it does so; the exercise of choice is the heart of morality, which in turn is the essence of humanity.

Martin Buber has stated that a pupil grows through his meeting with his teacher. This is no less so for the survivor than for the adjustor or the encounterer. Meeting is what should occur in the classroom; meeting between individuals who are unique and, therefore, different. In the end, the touchstone of our efforts will be less the quantity of children representing pain who we are able to place in slots, but rather the quality of education deriving from the meeting of differences.

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